

The 5 Marks of Missional Living – Justice

Matthew 5:38-48

Introduction:

This is merely a discussion guide for you and your Life Group regarding Matthew 5:38-48. We trust that the Holy Spirit will guide you, and if you have any concerns after your group conversation, please reach out. Today we cover the topic of justice in the world and in the lives of believers. Our local and global news is full of examples of injustice, and because of this, I pray for wisdom, comfort, and guidance during your discussion. When utilizing The Moody Bible Commentary for today, you can find the content on pages 1462-1463. - JF

Questions:

Consider watching The Bible Project's video on Justice – <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/justice/>

What is justice (or how would you describe to a five-year-old what justice is)? In your experience, what is the most just thing you have ever witnessed? What is the most unjust? Why is justice important, especially to Christians? What would you say if a person said, "God does not care about justice, just look at all the injustice in the world."? Whose job is it to enact justice? What type of justice do you long for?

What is the context and setting of our passage today? Why is that important to understand? In verse 38, Jesus says *"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."* From where does Jesus quote the first part of verse 38 (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21)? According to some commentators, the guidelines regarding an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (as found in Deuteronomy 19:21) were specifically given for civil, and not private, authorities to administer. Why is that an important understanding of the Old Testament verses? In what ways should a civil authority administer justice? Should there be caution for individuals to administer justice? Why or why not? From Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5, what can you conclude about individuals administering justice? What does Jesus say about those who harm another person? Is there a correlation between justice and revenge? If so, what is it? If not, why do you answer in this manner? What are Jesus' followers to learn and apply from verses 38-42?

In verses 43-45, Jesus says *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven."* What does it mean to love one's enemies? How should a person pray for those who persecute them? What is the connection between loving, praying, and justice? What is Jesus teaching the disciples about love when He highlights that God gives light and rain to the just and unjust? What does this reveal about the character of God? What does this reveal about what the character of a Christian should look like? What does Jesus mean when He says *"You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*? Why is Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount important for Christians to understand the Kingdom of God? How do you live within the standards of the Kingdom every day? What happens when you fail?

Tim Keller, in an article about justice in the Bible, said *"Biblical justice requires that every person be treated according to the same standards and with the same respect, regardless of class, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, or of any other social category."* Based on today's verses, do you agree or disagree and why? How is Keller's definition of justice different than the world's? What justice is easier to live with – God's or the world's? Where do you struggle most when it comes to justice? How can you live more justly?

Is there anything from Pastor Patrick's message on Sunday that you would like to discuss here? Is there anything from today's reading that you would like to explore more?

Conclusion:

As a group, consider praying for God's justice to be evident, for Christians to live justly, and for the conviction to repent of any unjust attitudes/actions. God is just and is the final authority to enact justice towards all sin and people. Brainstorm ways that you can and WILL begin to live justly with the help of the Holy Spirit as a result of your position in Christ (and not as a way to earn God's favor).